

LIFE  
OF VENERABLE  
**MARY**  
of the  
**INCARNATION**  
Ursuline Religious  
and  
FOUNDESS OF THE MONASTERY  
of QUEBEC  
(Canada)



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Marie Guyart, better known as Mary of the Incarnation, was born on October 28th. 1599, at Tours, (France). Her maternal ancestors were of gentle birth, while her father was of more humble parentage. Thus, would it seem, she was in some measure prepared for the arduous duties which filled her life, for, both noble and serf was she to educate side by side in the wilds of Canada. Both parents were moreover noted for their piety in times when piety was the rule, and their child was from infancy surrounded by an atmosphere of virtue which deeply influenced her youthful mind.

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Venerable Mary of the incarnation.



When but a child, the servant of God was visited by the first of these supernatural favors which later became so frequent : “ I was only seven years old, she writes, when “ in my sleep, methought I saw Heaven open and Our “ Lord coming down to me. He, the fairest among the “ children of “ men, drew “ near and “ tenderly “ embracing “ me, said : “ Wilt thou “ be Mine ? “ I answered “ Yes; and “ having received my “ consent, He “ reascended “ to Heaven.”

The Sa-  
viour's gra-  
cious visit  
increased  
tenfold the  
fervor of the  
little mai-  
den; prayer  
was hence-  
forth her  
only plea-  
sure and in it  
she found a relish  
till then unknown,  
addressing the  
Divine Master in  
all her childish  
wants as the kindest

and the dearest of fathers. Her delight was to spend long hours before the altar or in some solitary nook where unobserved she might commune with God. All the amusements which children of her age so eagerly pursued were utterly void of pleasure in her eyes, while reading pious books became a constant source of enjoyment.



Pious childhood of Marie Guyart.

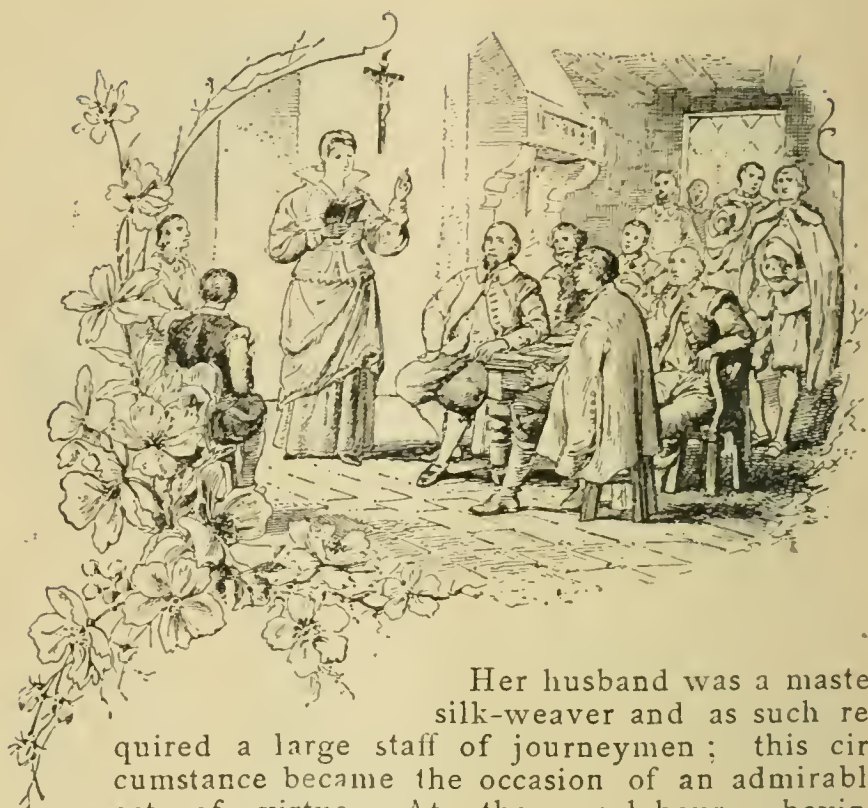


Whatever time was not employed in prayer the saintly child occupied in visiting the suffering poor, ministering to their wants and consoling them in their affliction. Such pious inclinations are often the prelude of a vocation to the religious life; indeed, Marie Guyart had but reached her fourteenth year when she manifested the desire to enter a convent, but God had otherwise ordained for the time being.

Our heroine was about seventeen when her parents, after the approved fashion, sought out a suitor for their daughter's hand and speedily found one pleasing to them. It was with great distress that the servant of God listened to the disclosure of these plans for her future. However, so completely was she inured to obedience, ever considering her parents' desires as the will of God, that she offered no objection and was shortly after married to Claude Joseph Martin, a respected tradesman of her native city. This event took place in 1616 and marks a new era in our heroine's life. We know but little of the two following years: however, it appears from the writings of the Venerable Mother that careful attention to the duties of her state did not prevent the young woman from leading a thoroughly devout life.

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Marie Guyart among the poor.



Her husband was a master silk-weaver and as such required a large staff of journeymen; this circumstance became the occasion of an admirable act of virtue. At the meal-hour, having attended to the wants of the household: the servant of God, motioning the rude audience to silence, would seek to benefit their souls by instructing them in the truths of religion and the duties of a christian. Every moment she could spare from the manifold occupations of a wife and a mother was zealously devoted to religious and charitable works.

Two years have elapsed: alas! Trials are at hand. In 1618 Mr. Martin died leaving his business in a most involved condition, thus dooming his widow and infant son to affliction and poverty. The courage of the heroic woman was greater than her misfortune: placing her trust in God she resolved to have no other solicitude but to search His kingdom. Vainly she was urged to remarry, for within her soul she heard the voice of grace calling her to a life of grater perfection. God alone was to be the object of her love forever.

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Marie Guyart teaching the ignorant.



A wonderful vision contributed not a little to strengthen within her this resolve : going one day to a distant part of the city, she was suddenly ravished in spirit and beheld herself plunged as it were into the Precious Blood. Meanwhile her soul was filled with bitter contrition for her sins and a firm determination to leave the world as soon as possible.

Unable for the time being to enter any religious order, the servant of God proceeded however to wind up her husband's estate, dismissed her attendants and retired to her father's house where she led the life of a recluse. A room in the upper story of her old home was placed at her disposal and there she spent her days in prayer and penance. The only visits she paid were to the neighboring church and to the poor ; the only friends welcomed to her solitude were the suffering and disabled whom she tenderly nursed and comforted.



Marie Guyart in her widowhood.

The pious widow had been only one year in this peaceful abode when it pleased God to call her back to the world and its cares: "After a twelvemonth of solitude, she relates, the Almighty drew me from it to help one of my sisters who, overburdened with work, requested my assistance. After some hesitation I accepted, with the condition that I would be at liberty to perform my usual exercises of piety." Our Lord rewarded this act of self-sacrifice by granting our heroine a higher gift of prayer and a more intimate union with himself. Not that her position was in any way favorable to growth in holiness; quite the reverse. The kitchen was her abode and she was expected to fill the most menial offices. During three or four years she dwelt with the servants more as a helpmate than a mistress. In the evening and a few times every day she went back to her father's residence so as to attend to the education of her son whom she brought up in the fear of the Lord.

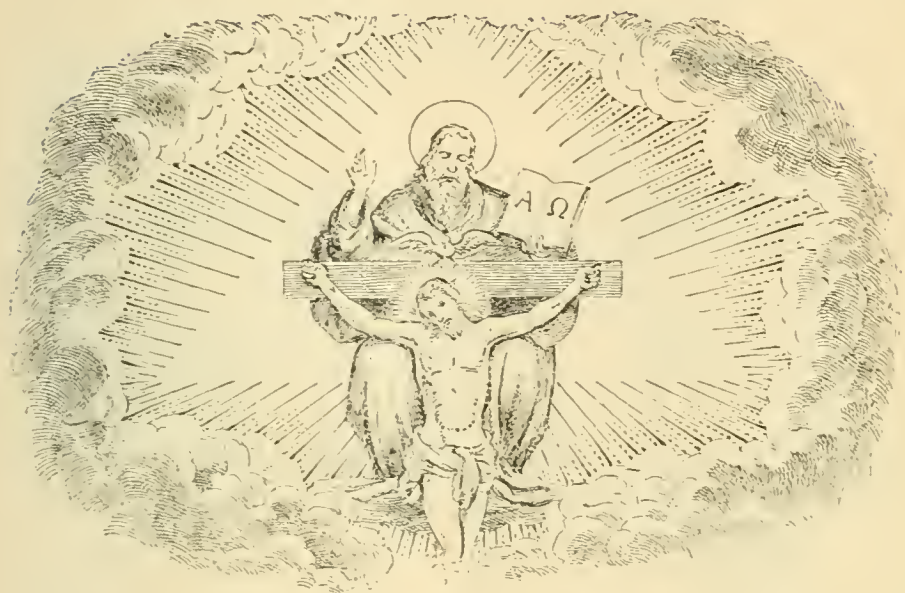


At no period of her life was the servant of God more overwhelmed with consolations from above, favors indeed

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House at Tours in which M. Guyart lived ten years with her sister.

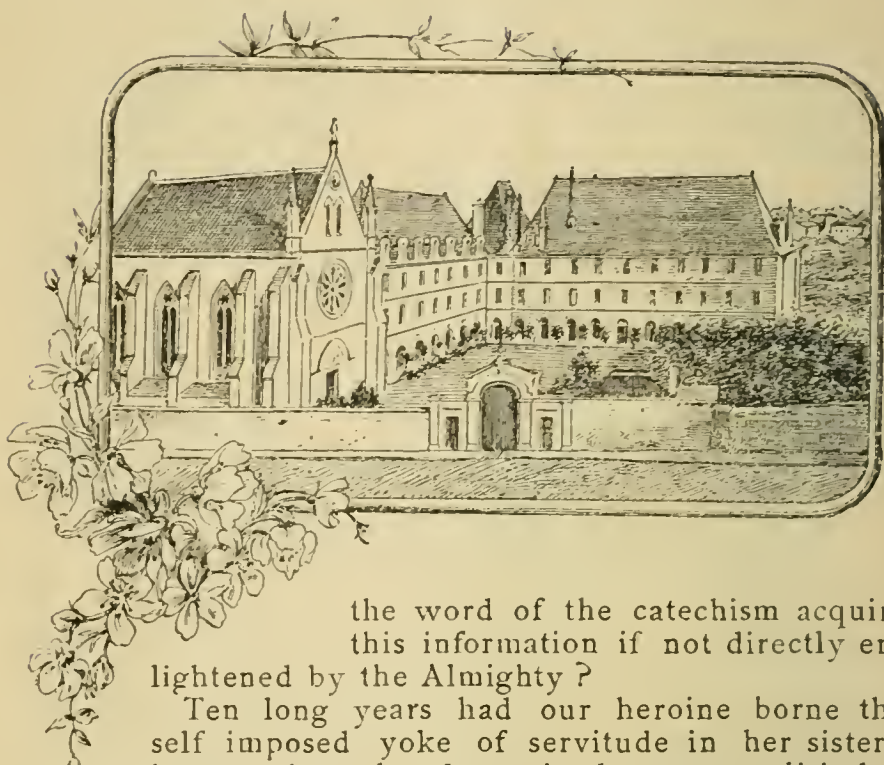




of so exalted a nature that none but persons well versed in spiritual matters can understand their excellence. Foremost among these manifestations of divine love is a vision of the Blessed Trinity. She thus describes it: "The morrow of Whitsunday (1624), I was hearing Mass in the chapel of the Cistercian Fathers when suddenly my eyes closed to all around me and my soul became entirely rapt and absorbed in the contemplation of the Most Holy Trinity. What I beheld was not conveyed by the senses but it was more palpable and real than any knowledge proceeding from them. I saw the unspeakable operations of the three Divine Persons: the Intelligence of the Father contemplating Himself and begetting the Son from all eternity; the mutual love of the Father and Son from which proceeds the Holy-Ghost;" then continuing her account she explains in accurate terms what in theology is considered as most abstruse on the subject of the Blessed Trinity. How could a young person whose religious instruction was limited to

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The Most Holy Trinity.



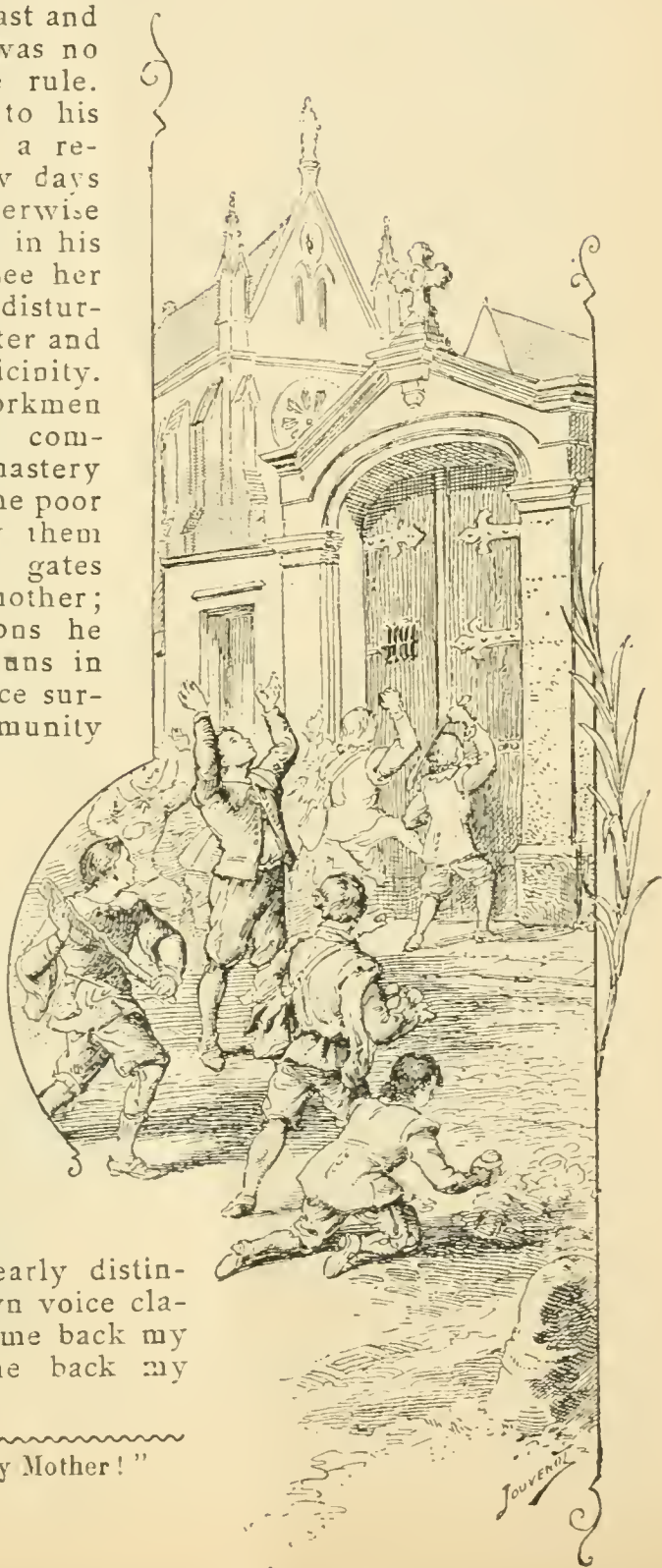
the word of the catechism acquire this information if not directly enlightened by the Almighty ?

Ten long years had our heroine borne the self imposed yoke of servitude in her sister's house when she determined to accomplish her long deferred and ever cherished desire of entering a religious order. No sooner had she manifested her intention than a storm of opposition arose: her nearest relatives were loudest in their reproaches, accusing her of cruelty to her son, but nothing could induce the servant of God to change her mind. The Ursulines had quite lately founded a convent in the city of Tours and from the outset the pious widow had felt an inclination to join them. She applied for admission and was accepted with joy, for her virtue was already known to the community. A few days later, on January 25th. 1631, bidding adieu to her aged father who wept bitterly at the parting and leaving to God's care her little son who bewildered and with wistful eyes accompanied her to the conventual door, she crossed the threshold ; to God she belonged for ever more.

Children's resolutions for either good or evil are not

always very steadfast and our heroine's son was no exception to the rule. He had consented to his mother's becoming a religious, but a few days later he thought otherwise of the matter and in his frantic efforts to see her caused no small disturbance in the cloister and its immediate vicinity. A number of workmen were engaged in completing the monastery buildings: often, the poor boy would follow them through the open gates in search of his mother; on several occasions he came upon the nuns in the garden, he once surprised the community by rushing into the refectory during dinner. But the crowning exploit of the orphaned child was to lead a troop of his little comrades armed with sticks and stones to attack the monastery. Amid the shouting and general uproar that followed, the poor novice could but too clearly distinguish a well known voice clamouring: "Give me back my Mother! Give me back my Mother!"

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"Give me back my Mother!"





She trembled lest the community should dismiss her to put an end to this annoyance, but her fears were unfounded. Shortly after this last feat, the youth was removed to a Jesuit college in the neighbouring province and troubled the religious no more.

The newly admitted novice was most edifying in her deportment with her sisters of the cloister. Unmindful of her age, learning, and experience in spiritual matters, she was simple as a child and took counsel of the youngest of her companions. After two years of unmingled spiritual joy the servant of God made profession on January 25th. 1633. During the first years of her religious life, the alternate sway of light and darkness, of consolation and dereliction in her interior life, was a source of much perplexity to Mary of the Incarnation : happily she found an able director in the person of Father de la Haye, a Jesuit, who assured her that in all she experienced he recognized the workings of the Holy Ghost. A few years after her profession, she was named sub-mistress of novices with the obligation of giving a course of instructions in the christian doctrine to all those committed to her charge.

“ These instructions, says her son, were so replete with




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Mary of the Incarnation teaching the novices.

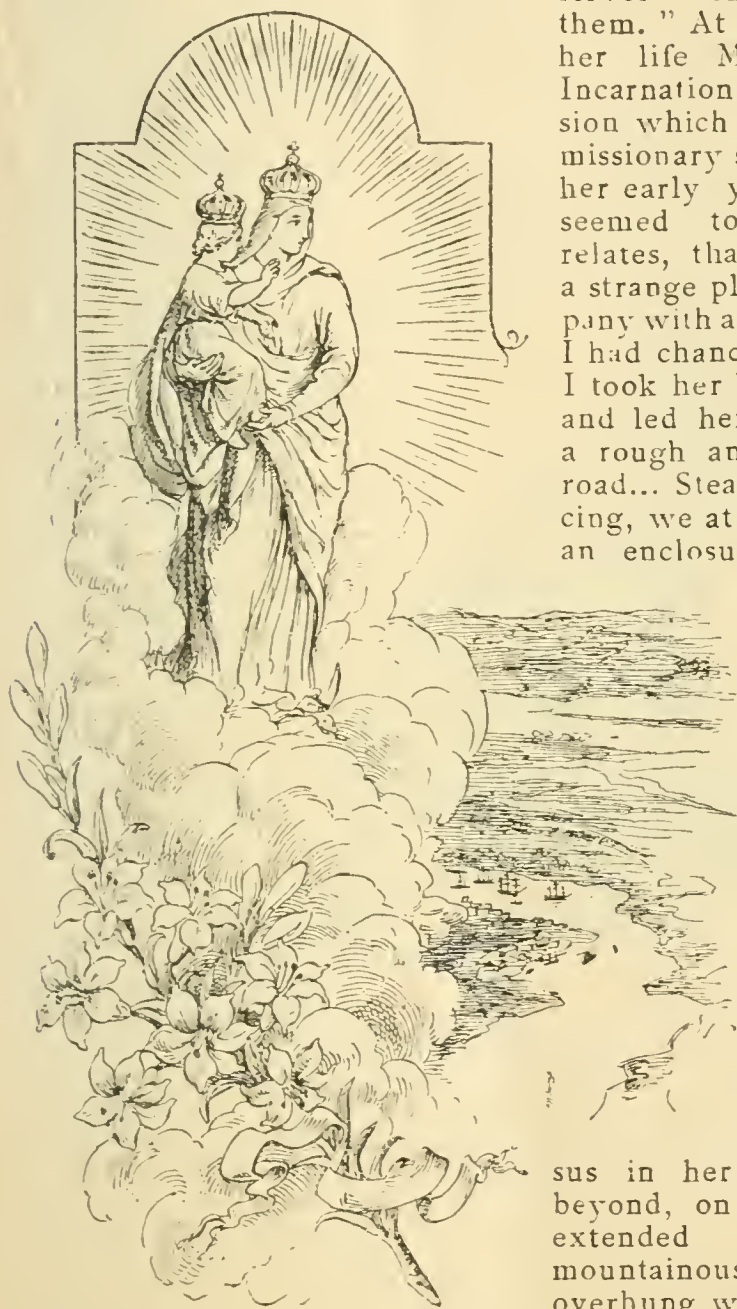
unction that the whole community was animated to new fervor on hearing them." At this time of

her life Mary of the Incarnation had a vision which revived the missionary spirit felt in her early youth. "It seemed to me, she relates, that I was in a strange place in company with a lady whom I had chanced to meet. I took her by the hand and led her away over a rough and fauguing road... Steadily advancing, we at last reached an enclosure not un-

like the inner court of a monastery: on one side rose a marble church of small dimensions where the Blessed Virgin was seated with the child Je-

sus in her arms. Far beyond, on every side extended a desolate mountainous region overhung with a heavy mist through which a

diminutive church might be faintly discerned. I observed




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Mary, the protectress of Canada.

that the Blessed Virgin seemed to be speaking to her Son glancing meanwhile in my direction. Finally, stooping down, she tenderly embraced me.

"I at once awoke wondering what this could mean, but filled with unspeakable consolation." Shortly after, a vision similar to the one just described solved the mystery, for she plainly heard these words: "The country you behold is Canada, go thither to build a house in honor of Jesus and Mary."

God in the meantime was preparing the way for the realization of His merciful designs. Madame de la Peltrie, a pious Norman Lady, being dangerously ill, vowed to Saint Joseph that should she recover she would build a church in his honor in Canada and devote her life and fortune to the

conversion of the Indians. No sooner was the promise made than she fell off into a peaceful sleep and awoke perfectly cured. Madame de la Peltrie needed assistance to accomplish her vow but little knew where to seek it.

The Jesuits of Paris urged her to secure the services of Mary of the Incarnation: this was done at once but kept secret. Shortly after, the pious Lady announced her intention of paying a visit to the convent at Tours. It happened that when this news was brought all the





community was assembled at an oratory in the Monastery garden called the Saint Joseph Hermitage, and then only were the wondering religious told of the impending event.

The appointed visit took place on February 19th. 1639. The noble Lady was received with due ceremonial at the cloister door and then led to the community hall where the religious were introduced to her. One and all evinced the desire to be selected for the perilous mission she was undertaking, but only two could be given.

"As for me, afterwards wrote Mary of the Incarnation, I at once recognized in Madame de la Peltrie the lady of my vision, the cast of features and manners were exactly alike."

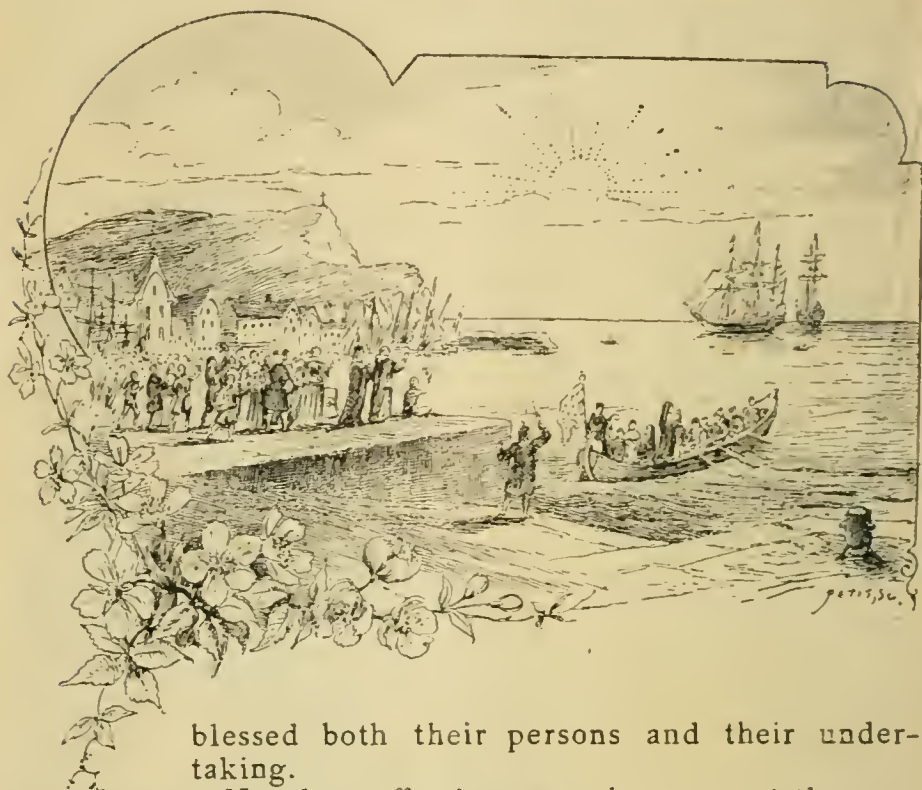
Events now followed in quick succession: a companion was found for Mary of the Incarnation in the person of the youthful Marie de la Troche, known in Canada as Mother Saint Joseph, and it was determined that February 22nd. would be the day of departure.

Archbishop D'Eschaux who then governed the church of Tours desired to see the Missioners. invited them to hear Mass in his chapel and when taking leave of the courageous exiles, with tearful eyes




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A Father's blessing.



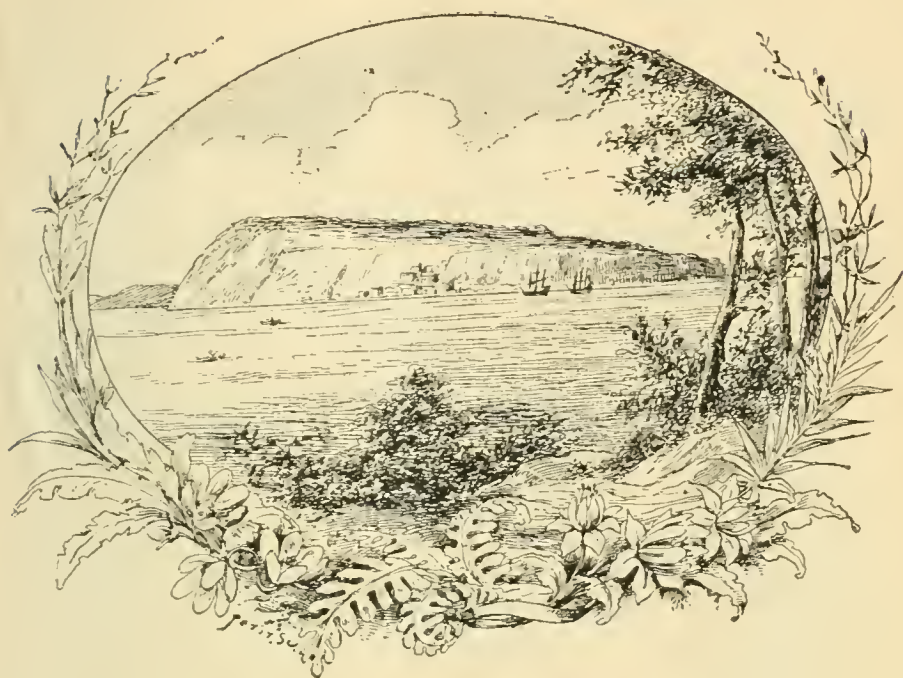
blessed both their persons and their undertaking.

Not less affecting was the scene at the convent when the parting hour had come. A few days later, the foundresses had reached Paris where they were detained by various incidents. Their arduous mission occupied public attention a moment and visitors came in numbers to the convent where they dwelt. The Queen, Anne of Austria, invited them to Court and took great interest in their plans for the future.

April was drawing to a close. all the preliminaries were settled, and the little colony set off for Dieppe where they were to embark. A companion was here found for the Ursulines in the person of Mother Mary of the Holy Cross, while three Hospital Nuns bound likewise for Quebec took passage in the same ship. They sailed on May 4th. 1639 amid the cheers of an admiring crowd which had gathered to witness their departure. "As I entered the launch which conveyed me on board, says Mary of the Incarnation, it seemed to me that I was entering Paradise, so happy did I feel to risk my life for Him who gave it. Within my heart I sang the

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Adieu to France (May 4th. 1639).



“ praises of my God who had led me on with such tender  
“ mercy. ”

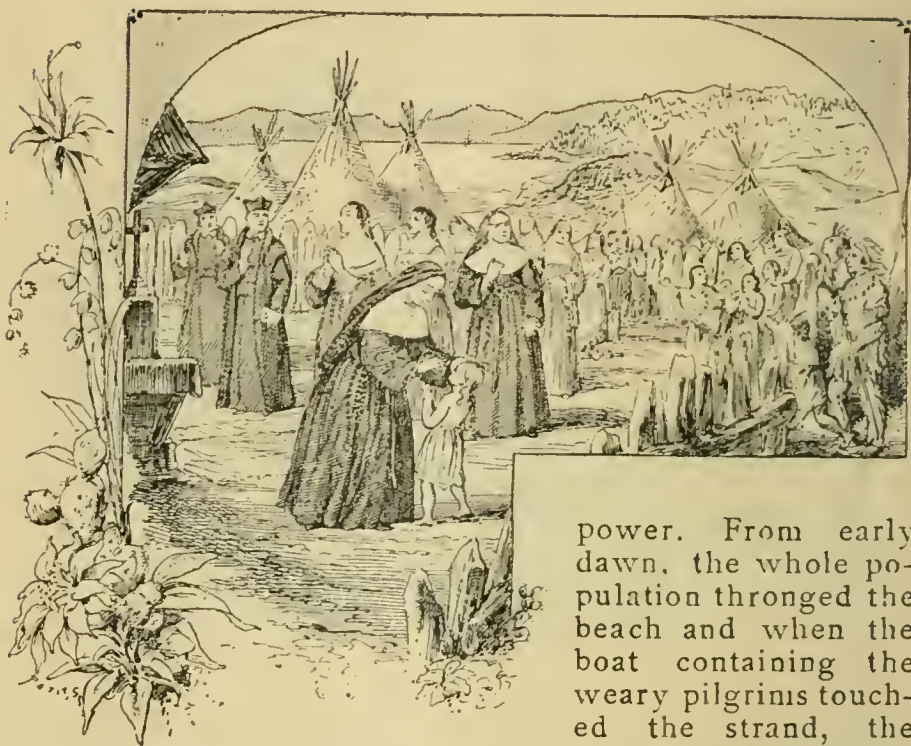
The passage was a long and perilous one : the sea however was not so boisterous as to generally prevent the celebration of Mass, and the fervent religious had the advantage of almost daily communion. The vessel which bore the missionary band resembled a monastery, so regularly were the observances kept and all the usual intervals of prayer and silence. Many were the dangers encountered : hardly had the french shore faded away when a Spanish squadron gave them chase ; a few weeks after, a huge iceberg came bearing down upon the vessel which narrowly escaped destruction, lastly, when nearing the american coast they were almost shipwrecked. Amid all these perils, Mary of the Incarnation did not experience the least anxiety, so great was her faith in the promises made her.

On the first of August, the lofty cliffs of Cape Diamond were in view with the straggling row of warehouses which lined its base and constituted the french settlement of Quebec. The Governor of the colony, Chevalier de Montmagny, gave the new-comers the best reception in his

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Quebec in 1639.





power. From early dawn, the whole population thronged the beach and when the boat containing the weary pilgrims touched the strand, the first to welcome their

arrival was De Montmagny in person escorted by the officers of his command. The cannon thundered from Fort St. Louis and salute followed salute as the religious came ashore and prostrate kissed the soil of their adopted country. They were led in triumph to the only church then existing where Mass was heard, and were entertained at Castle St. Louis until evening when they proceeded to the dwelling assigned them for the time being.

The daughters of Saint Ursula longed to see the Indian children for whom they had left their native land : great was their delight when the day after their arrival the Superior of the Jesuits conducted them to Sillery, an Indian hamlet near Quebec. The religious were overjoyed at the sight of these poor savages ; they went through the village, entering every wigwam, caressing the children and taking the greatest interest in the Indians who gazed upon their visitors with childlike admiration.

The miserable cabins inhabited by the natives had excited the pity of the missionaries but their own dwelling was not much better. The building was small and con-

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The Ursulines at Sillery (1639).



tained but two rooms : one of them, an apartment 16 feet square, was used as community-hall, choir, parlor and refectory ; the other, no larger than the first, became the class-room for both the French and Indian children. The chapel, vestry and kitchen were located in a wing hastily built of rough timber. Such was the sumptuous abode where during three years the Ursulines cheer-

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Mary of the Incarnation studying the Indian language.



fully endured privations and hardships of every kind.

Immediately after their arrival the religious commenced the study of the Indian dialects; Mary of the Incarnation applied herself to this wearisome task with such energy that in two months she was able to teach the natives catechism in their own tongue. Happiness reigned within the little cloister under the government of the servant

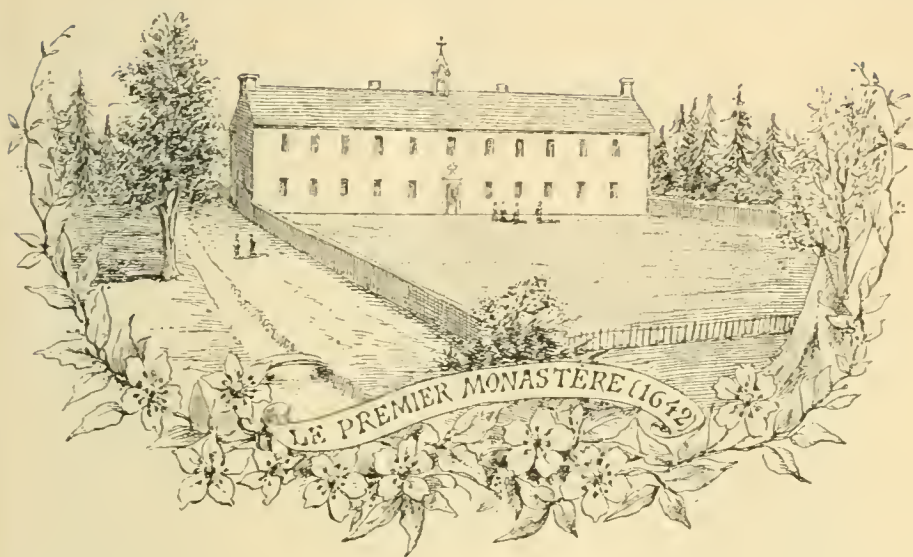


of God: however, her patience and that of her sisters was soon put to a very severe test. Hardly had the merchant-vessels sailed for France when the small-pox broke out among the Indians. It soon invaded the convent: one by one the children were attacked and in a few days the monastery became a hospital. So numerous were the little sufferers that their pallets had to be laid on the floor, scarcely leaving room to move among them. This conti-

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Mary of the Incarnation tending the sick.



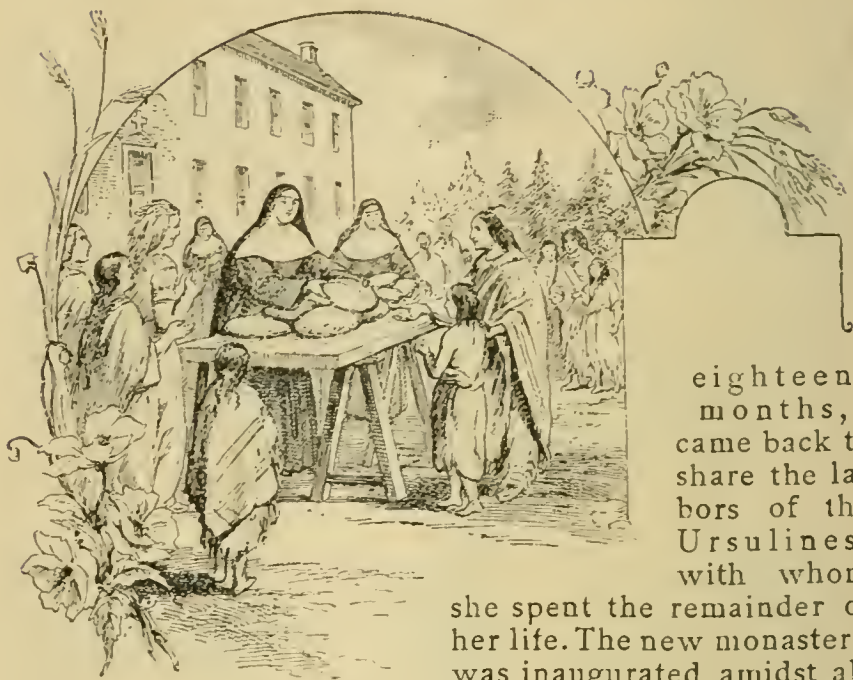


nued till mid-winter; still, strange to say, these heroines of charity escaped the contagion, greatly exposed as they were in breathing the deadly air of the sick-room and attending the dying patients.

In July 1640 the little community rejoiced in the arrival of two sisters from the Paris monastery: welcome were the recruits, but their coming rendered it imperative to provide a more spacious convent. The corner stone was laid in the spring of 1641, on the very site occupied by the present monastery and the work progressed favorably although the Venerable Mother was beset with innumerable contradictions. Interior trials, most crucifying to nature, were not among the least of her troubles: God and man seemed to forsake her alike. Her chosen companion, Mother Saint Joseph, cruelly grieved her; the Superiors at Tours found fault with her doings; no comfort was to be had from her director; and to crown all, Madame de la Peltrie, the constant benefactress of the convent, intimated her design of leaving for Montreal. Amidst these trials Mary of the Incarnation did not lose courage: the customary number of Indian children was maintained, the poor were assisted as usual and the building of the monastery suffered no delay. God rewarded his servant's faith: one by one the difficulties vanished, peace returned to her soul, abundant succor was received from France and Madame de la Peltrie, after an absence of

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The first Monastery (1642).



eighteen  
months,  
came back to  
share the la-  
bors of the  
Ursulines,  
with whom

she spent the remainder of  
her life. The new monastery  
was inaugurated amidst all  
these consolations on No-  
vember 21st. 1642. The build-

ding was of stone and measured ninety-two feet in length, but it was far from being completed; the chief partitions only had been put up and the flooring except in one story consisted but of loose planks laid across the beams. However, such as it was, the new house seemed a palace compared to the wretched dwelling on the beach. After governing the monastery for six years, the servant of God was transferred from the office of Superior to that of Treasurer which comprised several other functions. The bakery for instance was under her care, but to complicate matters, she first had to grind the wheat and sift the flour, work that not infrequently caused her hands to blister and bleed. It was about this time the religious first perceived that bread multiplied in the hands of the Venerable Mother. It often happened that having but two or three loaves to distribute among fifty or sixty savages, she gave to all a goodly portion and dismissed them praising God. This wonderful increase she never failed to attribute to the childlike faith of these children of the forest.

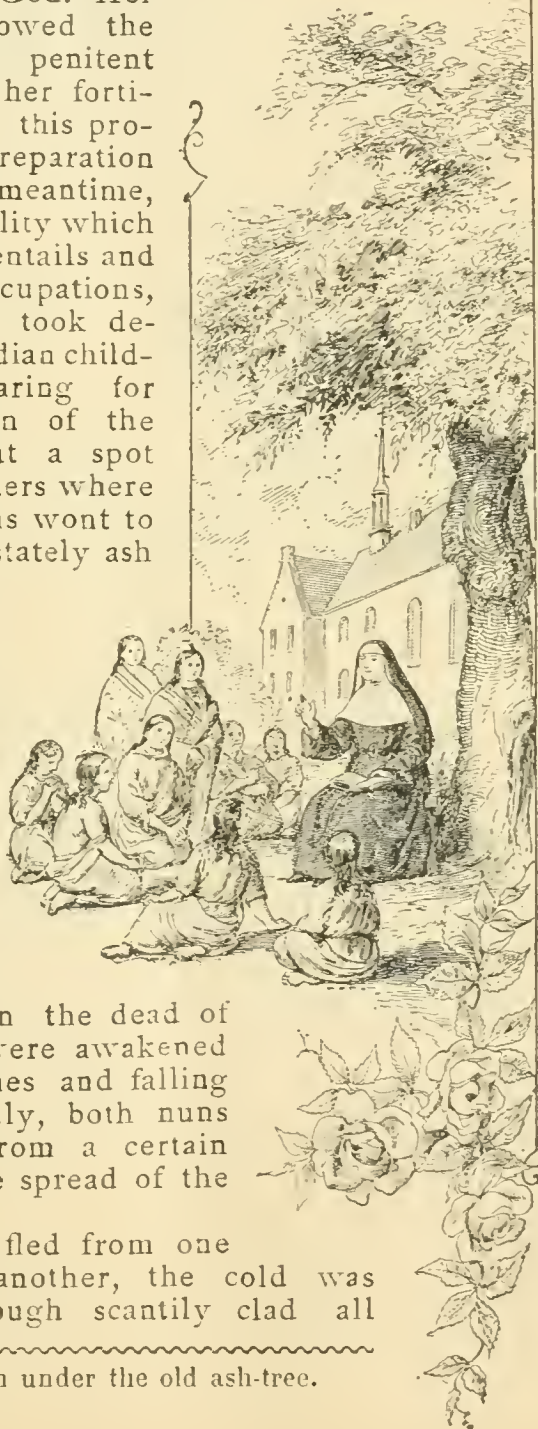
Ever mindful of her own spiritual good, Mary of the

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“ Deal thy bread to the hungry. ” (Is. 58, 7.)

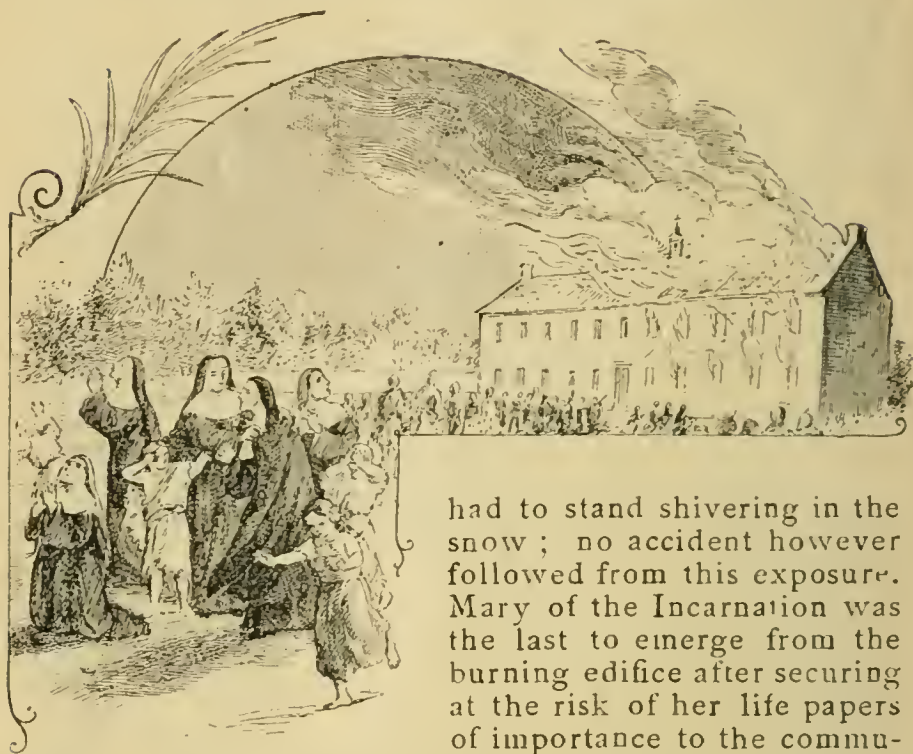
Incarnation had long cherished the desire of promising by vow that she would seek in everything the greatest glory of God. Her director at once allowed the request of his holy penitent knowing, as he did, her fortitude and love of God: this promise was a distant preparation for future trials. In the meantime, free from the responsibility which the office of Superior entails and despite her other occupations, the Venerable Mother took delight in teaching the Indian children who were preparing for baptism. The tradition of the Monastery points out a spot hallowed above all others where the servant of God was wont to resort; here of old, a stately ash afforded its shade while Mary of the Incarnation seated beneath the protecting boughs taught Christ and His doctrine to an attentive group of Indian girls. On December 29th, 1650, by the imprudence of a lay-sister, fire broke out in the basement of the Monastery and in the dead of night the religious were awakened by the crackling flames and falling timbers. By miracle only, both nuns and pupils escaped from a certain death so rapid was the spread of the devouring element.

But they had only fled from one danger to fall into another, the cold was most intense and though scantily clad all



Mary of the Incarnation under the old ash-tree.





had to stand shivering in the snow ; no accident however followed from this exposure. Mary of the Incarnation was the last to emerge from the burning edifice after securing at the risk of her life papers of importance to the community. Everything had been

destroyed; furniture, clothing, provisions, yearly supplies required for the subsistence of the community, the very walls were calcined and useless. In this calamity the Venerable Mother remained quite self-possessed and perfectly calm : " I experienccd, she " afterwards wrote, neither sadness nor anxiety but " submissively and lovingly adored the hand that chastised us. " No thought of discouragement entered her mind. Rebuilding and that immediately was her prompt determination. A few days after the fire, it was decided to erect a new monastery on a larger plan than the first, and at once the valiant sisters set to work on the yet smoking ruins preparing the way for the journeymen and the masons. Mary of the Incarnation, though not in office at the time of the fire, had to bear the burden of rebuilding for in June 1651 she was reelected for another term of three years.

The work was carried on so rapidly that in scarcely more than a year the community was sheltered in the

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Burning of the first Monastery.



convent which had risen from its ashes more spacious than before. The Venerable Mother admits in a letter to her son that this restoration was nothing short of a miracle. After rebuilding the Monastery, she was free once more to devote herself entirely to the instruction of the Indians. She spoke with equal fluency four of the most prevailing dialects and was familiar alike with Huron and Iroquois, Algonquin and Montagnais.

The interior life of the Venerable Mother from the

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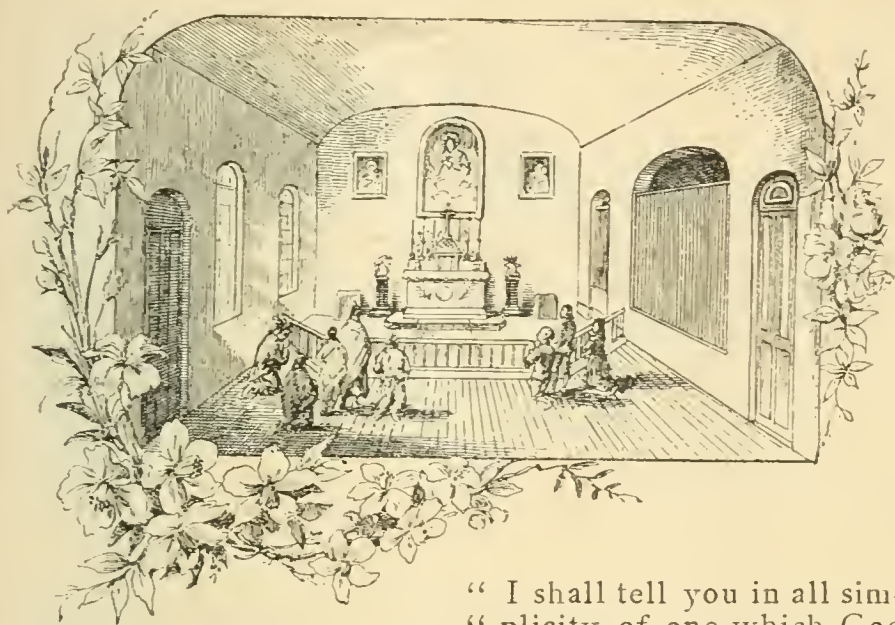
Building the second Monastery.

year 1652 to the year 1654 was one of peace and consolation. It is in a letter to her son about this time that she acquaints him with a devotion practised by her for thirty years and which God himself had taught her, we allude to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In 1635 when the servant of God was submistress in the monastery at Tours, one night as she was praying for the extension of the kingdom of God, an interior light showed her that her prayers were unheeded. More earnest became her preading and she was rewarded by hearing these words: "Ask by the Heart of Jesus my beloved Son, by Him will I hear Thee and grant thy request." "From that moment, says the Venerable Mother, I was preserved in union with the divine and most adorable Heart of Jesus, so that I neither spoke nor breathed but by it." In 1661, she added the details which follow: "You desire to know what practices of piety I generally perform.



The Sacred Heart of Jesus.





“ I shall tell you in all sim-  
 “ plicity of one which God  
 “ himself inspired me. It is in honor of the most adorable  
 “ Heart of Jesus. For thirty years I have continued this  
 “ devotion, concluding my daily prayers by it and never  
 “ have I left it aside unless compelled by illness or total  
 “ inability. Thus do I pray addressing God the Father :  
 “ By the Heart of Jesus, my way, my life and my truth I  
 “ come to Thee, O Eternal Father. By the Divine Heart I  
 “ adore Thee for all who adore Thee not ; I love Thee  
 “ for all who love Thee not, I acknowledge for all those  
 “ who in their wilful blindness refuse to acknowledge  
 “ Thee. By the Divine Heart I render Thee the homage  
 “ which all creatures owe Thee. In spirit I go to the ends  
 “ of the earth to seek for the souls redeemed by the  
 “ Precious Blood of Jesus. I embrace them all to present  
 “ them all to Thee by It, and by It do I implore their  
 “ conversion. Eternal Father, suffer them not to ignore  
 “ my Jesus, suffer them to live but for Him who died for  
 “ all. Thou seest, O heavenly Father, that they live not  
 “ as yet ; O give them the life of grace by this Divine  
 “ Heart ! And Thou, O Word Incarnate ! Jesus my Be-  
 “ loved, Thou knowest all I would ask of Thy Father by  
 “ Thy Divine Heart. What I ask of Thee I ask of Him for  
 “ Thou art in Thy Father and Thy Father is in Thee. I

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Old Chapel of the Ursuline Monastery where Mary of the Incarnation  
 prayed to the Sacred Heart as early as 1642.



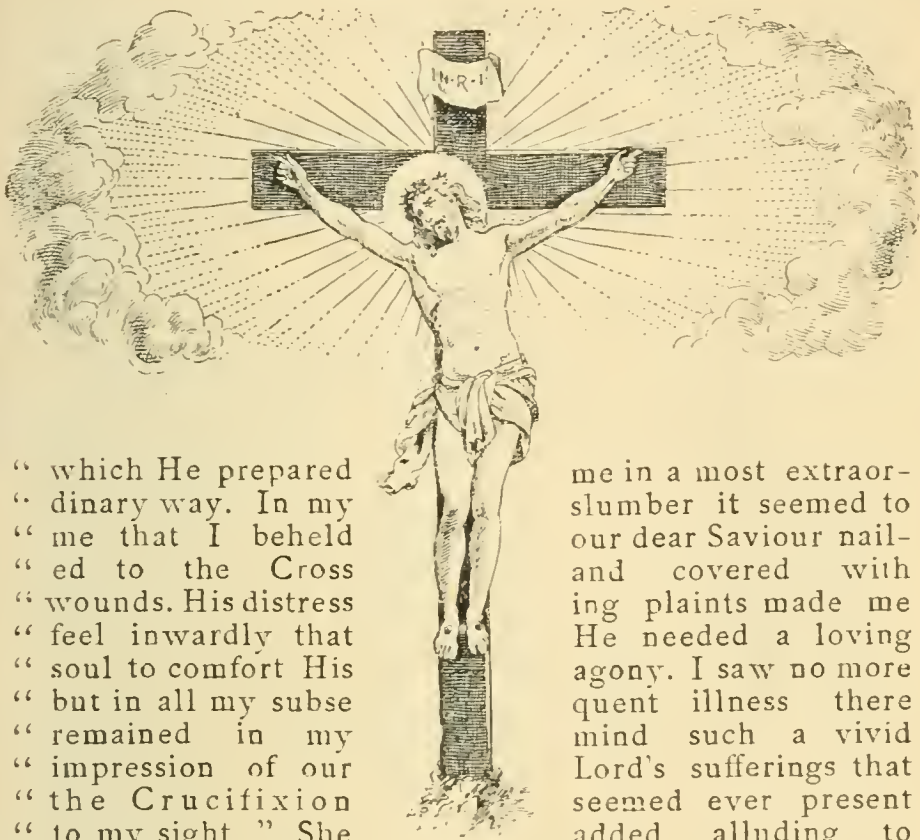
“ present Thee all these souls, make them one with Thee forever. ” — “ Is it not a thing most worthy of remark, says a historian of Mary of the Incarnation, that this saintly religious practised during the latter half of her life such a tender devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. How God must have loved His servant to have thus revealed to her a devotion which was made known to His church but fifty years later ! ”

Was not this adoration of the Sacred Heart the secret of her strength, the source of her serenity and calmness in the midst of danger ? Whether it be the hostile Iroquois encamped in sight of the convent walls, threatening the little colony with destruction as in 1660, or the earth itself convulsed and trembling under her feet, she manifests the same intrepidity. “ While universal terror prevailed, writes her son alluding to these events, while the consternation of all could only be likened to the fear which men will experience at the end of the world, Mary of the Incarnation undismayed retained her usual equanimity. ” The apostolic labors of the Venerable Mother are drawing to a close.

Not many years are now left her and they are to be filled with suffering : thus God will give the finishing stroke to her sanctification. “ In 1664, she writes, it pleased our Lord to send me a very severe illness for

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The Monastery besieged (1660).



“ which He prepared  
 “ dinary way. In my  
 “ me that I beheld  
 “ ed to the Cross  
 “ wounds. His distress  
 “ feel inwardly that  
 “ soul to comfort His  
 “ but in all my subse  
 “ remained in my  
 “ impression of our  
 “ the Crucifixion  
 “ to my sight. ” She  
 her sufferings: “ they  
 “ expression and my only fear is that my weakness  
 “ will oblige the Almighty to diminish them. I delight  
 “ in this cross and I prefer it to any possible pleasure, ”  
 and elsewhere : “ God in His goodness has sent me this  
 “ illness as a token of love, with all my heart do I  
 “ thank Him. ”

me in a most extraor-  
 slumber it seemed to  
 our dear Saviour nail-  
 and covered with  
 ing plaints made me  
 He needed a loving  
 agony. I saw no more  
 quent illness there  
 mind such a vivid  
 Lord's sufferings that  
 seemed ever present  
 added alluding to  
 are dear to me beyond

“ expression and my only fear is that my weakness  
 “ will oblige the Almighty to diminish them. I delight  
 “ in this cross and I prefer it to any possible pleasure, ”  
 and elsewhere : “ God in His goodness has sent me this  
 “ illness as a token of love, with all my heart do I  
 “ thank Him. ”

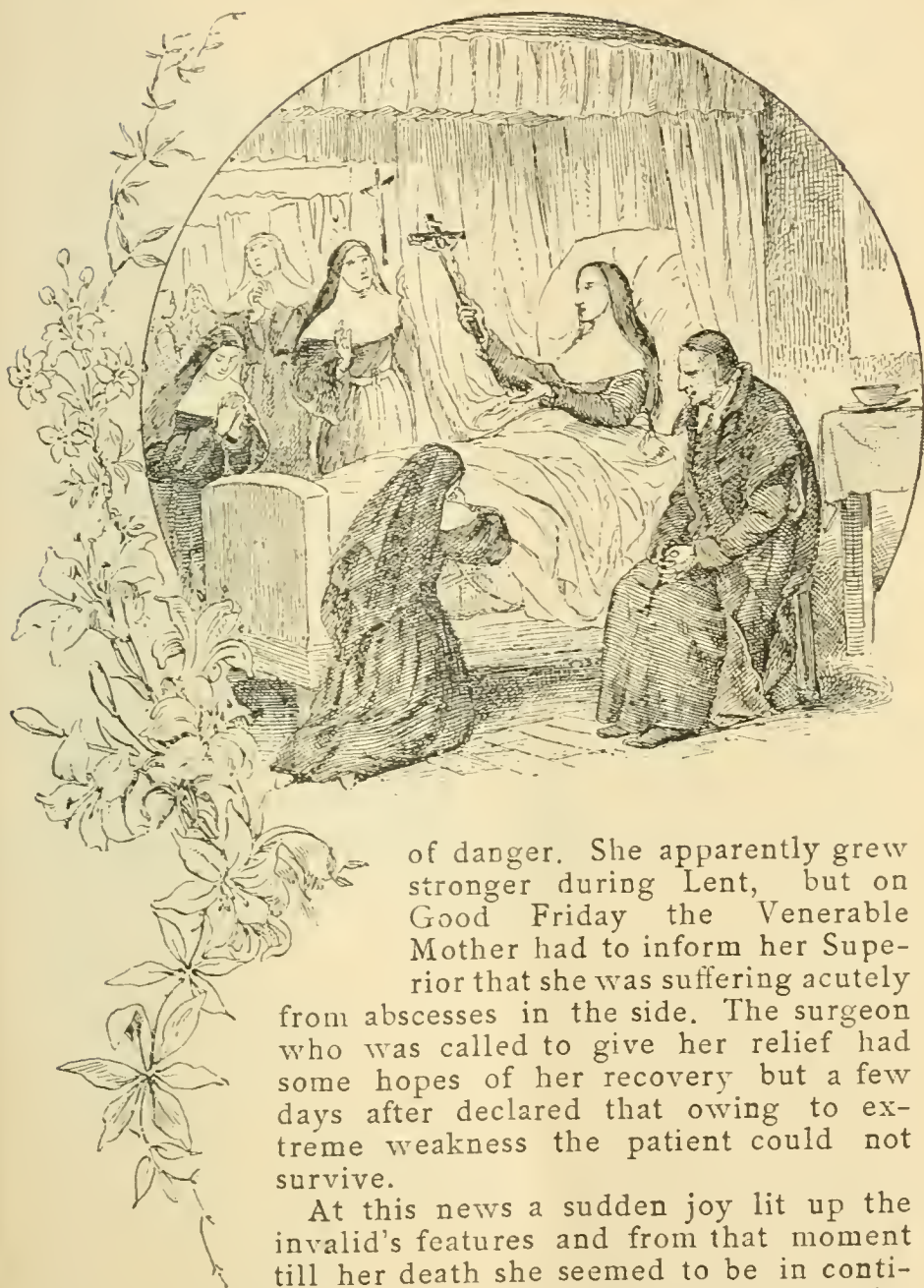
Although hardly convalescent she was for a fourth time  
 elected Superior and through respect for the wishes of  
 her sisters she accepted the office. The Venerable Mother  
 fulfilled all the duties of her position as if in the best of  
 health : ever present at the observances, she fasted an  
 entire Lent although her weakness was so extreme that it  
 prevented her from kneeling more than ten minutes at a  
 time. During the three following years the health of the  
 aged mother somewhat improved and she took advantage  
 of the respite granted to complete several unfinished works



in the Indian tongue. However, her yearning to be with God every day grew stronger : “ I rejoice, she wrote in 1669 to a religious at Tours, I rejoice in the thought that the world and the things thereof will vanish from our eyes and that communion with the Blessed alone will become our happy lot. ” The last letter written to her son describes a state familiar to extatic souls : are we not listening to Saint Teresa when we hear Mary of the Incarnation say ? “ Whatever subject of meditation I take, I at once forget it. In a moment I am carried off into my usual train of thought and my soul contemplates God in whom it lives. With Him I commune as He Himself inspires me ; I contemplate Him and in so doing my soul cannot be silent. I speak to Him as to my Spouse and I am powerless to use other language but what He lends me. My love is never mute and my heart beats but for charity alone. The aspirations which give me life come from my Heavenly Spouse and so consume me with love that if God did not measure His grace to the weakness of human nature ; I would be overcome and this life should cause my death. ” Mary of the Incarnation was evidently laboring under the same difficulty as Saint Paul after his vision of Heaven, she could not express what she plainly understood and with touching simplicity she adds : “ I am trying to say what words are powerless to explain, and how far I am successful I know not. ” This letter, the last written to her son, gives an exalted idea of the perfection the Venerable Mother had attained.

On January 15th, 1672 a sudden weakness accompanied by most intense fever laid her prostrate and henceforth the servant of God was the victim of untold suffering. Not a sigh escaped her lips : joyful to see herself crucified with the Divine Master, she frequently exclaimed : “ With Christ I am nailed to the Cross ! ”

Five days later the physicians gave up all hope and the last sacraments were administered. Meanwhile the community in the greatest grief besought Heaven to prolong the existence of one so dear. Her spiritual advisor, Father Lallemant bade her ask the restoration of her health. With perfect resignation she complied, saying : “ O my Lord and my God ! If Thou knowest I can still be useful to this little community, I refuse neither pain nor labor. ” No sooner had she said these words than a change took place and shortly after she was declared out



of danger. She apparently grew stronger during Lent, but on Good Friday the Venerable Mother had to inform her Superior that she was suffering acutely from abscesses in the side. The surgeon who was called to give her relief had some hopes of her recovery but a few days after declared that owing to extreme weakness the patient could not survive.

At this news a sudden joy lit up the invalid's features and from that moment till her death she seemed to be in continual extasy. On Friday April 27th. she again received the Rites of the Church with sentiments of piety that drew tears from the eyes of her sisters.

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“ With Christ I am nailed to the Cross. ”

Feeling that her end was now very near, on April 30th. she sent for the Indian children and blessing them from her heart spoke to them of the beauty of our holy religion and of the happiness of serving God.

Towards evening as the weeping sisters were all kneeling by her side, she opened her eyes and

looked at them as for a final parting, then calmly resigned her soul to God. At this moment, a ray of heavenly light illuminated her countenance and the religious in mingled grief and admiration could not but notice the transformation.

All who witnessed this most holy death remembered the

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Mary of the Incarnation blessing the Indian children.



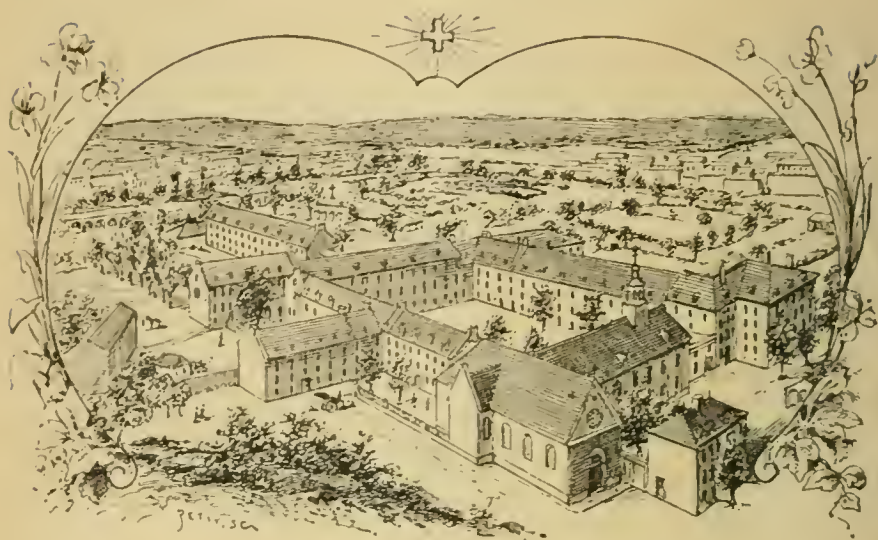




circumstance and to preserve it from oblivion, ever since on this anniversary, the inmates of the Monastery chant a "Te Deum" of thanksgiving.

At the news of Mary of the Incarnation's death the whole population showed the greatest sorrow, manifesting in the same time the deepest veneration for the "Saintly Mother" as they called her. Everything that had belonged to her, [whether garments, books or medals], was claimed as a relic. One of her earliest biographers, Father Charlevoix, says that at the moment of her death she was canonized by the public voice the world over. Years have only increased the renown of sanctity which Mary of the Incarnation enjoyed all her life and her name in our own times is everywhere invoked. The prayers of the Venerable Mother have proved efficacious, for one of her latest historians was able in 1873 to publish a list of over sixty important favors attributed to her intercession, and the number has greatly increased since.

As early as 1751 the question of the canonization of the servant of God was discussed, but political changes and the difficulty of corresponding with the Roman Court debarred the proceedings. A hundred years went by and still nothing had been done for the glorification of Mary of the Incarnation. At last, in 1867, the first steps towards securing her Beatification were taken and the preliminary



process was admitted by Rome. Since, at intervals regulated by the progress of the Cause, the Congregation of Rites has published several decrees which have filled the children and clients of the Venerable Mother with joy.

May Heaven grant a speedy realization to the hopes awakened by such an auspicious beginning! It will be a happy day for Canada and all the Ursuline Order when the infallible voice of the Church will authorize the faithful to invoke publicly as a saint the one who still living was styled by Bossuet, "The Teresa of New-France."

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† E. A. CARD. TASCHEREAU, ARCH. QUEBECEN.

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